Working for *Educated Environments* in Mumbai

This summer, I worked for a sustainability consulting and environmental design firm based in Mumbai, India called *Educated Environments*. I worked in their office space as their intern, with my own independent research project on Mumbai’s urban forest, how to expand it, and the relationship Mumbai, as a highly urbanized space, has with nature. My deliverable was a 40 or so slide presentation that summarized my research and design proposal. My proposal was a two-pronged approach to expand Mumbai’s urban forest: one, a redevelopment plan for abandoned mill spaces to be converted into urban forest patches within the city, and two, small patch forest modules to be repeated along streets, connecting Mumbai’s forest patches in long forest corridors. The last segment of my delivered project was the first map ever made of Mumbai’s green cover. My project was closely monitored by my supervisors (architects in *Educated Environments*), and they helped me structure my research, contact important actors within the city, and analyze large data.

My daily work included going to the office every day from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., where I had my own desk space in the office of six architects. During the morning, I mostly did web research, where I emailed possibly useful contacts, analyzed articles and case studies, worked on my map and design proposal, and compiled my research into a presentation. Many afternoons, I would visit parks within the city and meet with contacts to conduct interviews about their views on Mumbai’s urban forest, the city’s relationship with nature, and ways that the urban forest has already been expanded. My favorite of these meetings included an interview with the park
manager of the Maharashtra Nature Park—a landfill that had been converted into a public forest park in the 1970’s and 80’s within the densest part of the city.

This summer transformed my life and my career path—I got to actually practice the theory, policy, and design work I discuss and make in my classes. The reality of practicing urban design in a developing country, especially a mega-city with such spatial pressure and lack of land as Mumbai, expanded my interpretation of reality and grounded me much more the struggle of making major changes in the world: changing the world is difficult… it requires immense passion and determined patience.

One of Mumbai’s 1 million trees that makes up its 25% green cover: a green cover that is more than San Francisco’s and Seattle’s but is distributed in a way that leaves massive concrete islands within the city.
One of the dying street trees due to a mealy bug epidemic destroying the city's trees.

Street view of Mumbai in a forested part of the city.
The nursery of Maharashtra Nature Park.

The view of the Mithi River, one of the most polluted rivers in the world, and the central business district of Mumbai, across from Dharavi, Asia’s largest informal settlement—through the trees of Maharashtra Nature Park.
A small park in the Western part of the city.

A visit to Maharashtra to see the natural ecology of the Mumbai region - what the jungle was.
The geology of the Maharashtra region around Mumbai.

The collection pond at Maharashtra Nature Park that provides the water for the park’s forest at no cost to the city or to citizens.
A street view showing the current urban forest ecology of Mumbai.